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Mattijs Ploeger, *Celebrating Church: Ecumenical Contributions to a Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy, 7; Groningen/Tilburg: Instituut voor Liturgische en Rituele Studies, 2008), xxii + 570 pp. €49.68. ISBN 978-90-367-3450-9 (pbk).

Considerable in breadth and length, this book surveys Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Anglican and Protestant contributions to liturgical ecclesiology in order to answer the question: 'How does looking at the church from the angle of the liturgy affect one's theology of the church?' (p. 3) Its scope of engagement is impressive and facilitated by the use of sources in several languages.

The author, a Dutch Old Catholic priest, is well-placed to address these themes, ministering in a church with a distinctive ecumenical identity (including a 1975–86 dialogue with the Orthodox Churches which achieved full theological consensus) and an ecclesiology which has developed in creative tension with that of the Roman Catholic Church (or the 'New' Catholic Church, as Old Catholic theologian Urs Küry described it). The emphasis in Old Catholic ecclesiology on the local church naturally elevates the importance of its eucharistic celebration.

As might be expected, the section on Old Catholic contributions is among the most informative, summarizing suggestive material not easily accessible to English readers. This includes Andreas Rinkel's rooting of ecclesiology in the common baptism of all Christians; Küry's understanding of the bishop as a mediator between the local church and the universal church, which is represented only in the local church; this idea as developed by Werner Küppers, that the bishop is primarily a local minister who derives his ministry from local presidency rather than universal succession or apostolate; Kurt Stalder's and Herwig Aldenhoven's emphasis on the 'over against' (*Gegenüber*) character of ministry, manifested constructively in the different roles of clergy and lay people and their reciprocal relationships; Jan Visser's realization that it is in the liturgy that the church is most clearly a religious organism, because it is here that spiritual communion and ordered community are most fully combined; Urs von Arx's *Ortskirchenekklesiologie* (ecclesiology of the local church).

As it progresses, the study presents insights meriting further reflection: Nicholas Afanasiev's view that a ministry of administration (*kubernesis*) is intrinsic to eucharistic presidency; the Old Catholic awareness of episcopal ministry as founded on the priority of the bishop's local church and not just the person or office of the bishop; and Swiss Reformed pastor Jean-Jacques von Allmen's insistence that, whereas priesthood extends to all the baptized, the ministerial role is rightly restricted to the ordained. Ploeger correctly perceives the central place in worship of the laity, who exercise a ministry of discernment by receiving (or not receiving!) liturgical innovations, helping to ensure that everything happens in accordance with God's will.

This study comprises a substantial contribution to the growing field of liturgical ecclesiology. Despite his inclusive subtitle and recognition of the importance of baptism in the theology of Afanasiev, Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul Avis, Ploeger himself sees liturgical ecclesiology as primarily eucharistic ecclesiology. The eucharist is, he affirms the first 'instrument of communion' binding together the local and universal churches (p. 520). As Afanasiev recognized, the eucharist both affirms and transcends locality. Although Ploeger identifies Afanasiev as the father of eucharistic ecclesiology, he sees John Zizioulas as developing the key insight that it is in the eucharistic *koinonia* that locality and universality become simultaneous. But Jean-Marie Tillard, the Canadian Dominican, is singled out for special

praise for his balancing of locality and universality, based on the vision that the eucharist, although constituting the local church, surpasses that church in both space and time, connecting it ‘diachronically with the church of all times and places, with the whole company of saints’ and ‘synchronically with all other local celebrating communities’. As an instrument of communion, the eucharist is complemented by the bishop, conciliarity and primacy, which together enable the local church to exist at the centre of what Tillard calls a ‘communion of communions’.

More insights could be mentioned that would enrich this vision further. Reading from a common lectionary—which extends, of course, beyond the eucharist into the daily cycle of the offices—gathers the countless local churches not only around a single table but around the same texts. Moreover, ritual elements of the eucharist have been employed in various traditions to express its extension through space and time: the sending of the consecrated host from one local church to another; reservation of the host consecrated at one eucharist to be distributed in the next; use of vessels, furnishings or images given by one local church to another. Ploeger conceives liturgy as the ‘enactment of Christian faith and living’ (p. 10), explicitly sidelining ritualistic perspectives, but ritual cannot ultimately be ignored, not least because of its fundamental importance in human life generally.

Despite its strengths, the study frequently digresses. One of numerous examples is the discussion about the evolving relationship between *presbyteroi* and *episkopoi* in the early church and its links with Jewish patterns of association in the context of Afanasiev’s *The Church of the Holy Spirit* (pp. 45–7). This diffuseness is due primarily to an extremely wide frame of reference: it is difficult to think of many issues that might not be relevant to an examination of ecumenism, liturgy and ecclesiology and their interrelationships in theology and church. The work is also largely descriptive, venturing into critique just occasionally, such as when discussing Joseph Ratzinger’s tendency to prioritize the theological idea of the church as universal over empirical manifestations of the church in localities. It has something of the feel of a textbook, and indeed could be used as one. Theologians with chapters who are not mentioned elsewhere in this review are Henri de Lubac, Gabriel Hebert, Gregory Dix, Michael Ramsey, Rowan Williams, Catherine Pickstock, Oepke Noordmans, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Gordon Lathrop, Albert Ploeger and Joke Ploeger-Grotegoed.

Furthermore, there is much repetition. This results from the book’s structure as a presentation of a long series of thinkers and the desire to identify areas where there is ‘increasing ecumenical convergence regarding the relationship between ecclesiology and the liturgy, particularly the eucharist’ (p. 391). In a future work, these points of consensus could be gathered together and summarized in order to leave more space to address points of tension and difference. This would make possible a much tighter analysis delineating possible ways forward in theological conversations and ecumenical dialogues about the issues which, in reality, continue to divide Christian churches. Ecumenism only really becomes valuable when its dialogues extend beyond sympathizers to encompass people who seriously disagree on fundamentals. The current book’s focus on areas of convergence would lead a reader who lacked background knowledge to the extraordinary conclusion that no significant differences between the churches currently exist.

It is also crucial to examine ecumenical liturgical ecclesiology in the context of the churches’ political witness. Even Leonardo Boff, the outspoken Brazilian liberation theologian who left the Franciscan order and priestly ministry, is here presented as a largely benign and uncontroversial figure. Moreover, in an age when mission is a large challenge facing all

European churches, liturgical ecclesiology needs to have a frame of reference extending beyond the ecumenical.

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